THE PRINCIPLES OF MODERATION.

ADDRESSED TO THE

CLERGY OF THE POPULAR INTEREST

IN THE

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

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Heu nimis longo satiate ludo.

EDINBURGH:
Printed for C. ELLIOT, PARLIAMENT-SQUARE,
M.DCC.LXXXII.

[Price ONE SHILLING.]

GENTLEMEN,

IF, from the title of this addreſs, ye ſhall take for granted that it is intended to ſerve the purpoſes of a party, to palliate errors on the one ſide, and to retort on the other accuſation and cenſure, ye will either throw it aſide with neglect, or peruſe it with ſuſpicion.

There is one circumſtance, however, which may prevent you from expecting to find either diſingenuity or invective in a paper on the ſubject of eccleſiaſtical policy; which is, that for more than twenty years paſt, the writings of the miniſters of the church of Scotland have in no inſtance been diſgraced by characteriſtics ſo unworthy of gentlemen and of Chriſtians.

The moral principles of men muſt be greatly corrupted, before they are capable of becoming abuſive in writing; and thus demonſtrating to the world, that, even in the

retreats of the cloſet, they are haunted by the demons of malice and party-rage.

The Scottiſh clergy appear unſtained with theſe vices, even in the ſcenes of public controverſy, in which men are moſt apt to forget their courteſy and their meekneſs.

When the two great parties of this church meet in general aſſemblies, they exhibit a ſpectacle which is without parallel in a court ſo numerous, and which does honour to themſelves and to human nature. Animated on both ſides with zeal, with emulation, with deſire of victory, they appear ſtill under the influence of the moſt guarded reſpect to the rules of decorum, and to the precepts of Chriſtian charity. Even in the ardour of debate, and amidſt the keen colliſion of oppoſite views, there is rarely ſuch a thing known as perſonal reflection, uncandid conſtruction, or unfriendly reproof.

It is not difficult to account for the ſingular decency of our popular court; it is compoſed of men whoſe education is liberal, and who well underſtand the principles of that divine religion, which, while it permits our zeal, proſcribes the ſpirit which is wrathful and ungentle.

Laudable, however, as the behaviour of the members of the church is, in the conduct of public debates; thoſe who judge of them merely from their appearances in courts,

courts, will widely miſtake the terms on which they mutually ſtand. In private life, the clergy aſſociate together as brethren, as ſervants of the ſame Maſter, and joint ſupporters of one great cauſe. The apparent diviſion is a ſpeculative thing; they know no diviſion in the exerciſe of their ſacred function, or in the offices of friendſhip and affection.

We love and we eſteem you, Gentlemen, and we are loved and eſteemed by you; we know, that, in private life, ye deſerve our beſt regards; and believe, that, in public conduct, ye act from principle: and ye, in return, entertain no doubts of the purity of our intentions, or the ſincerity of the opinions which we maintain. What pity, that among ſuch men there ſhould be any public difference! Such is the reflection which would naturally occur, were the ſubject of contention recent. But when it is conſidered, that the ſubject of contention hath ſubſiſted for an age; that it relates to an arrangement merely political; and that the church has for ſo long a period been almoſt equally divided, without any proſpect of peace or coalition; the inference goes deeper, and we are naturally led to ſuſpect, that the arrangement in queſtion is in ſome reſpect unwiſe, and that for the peace and unity

of the church it ought to be reviſed and reformed.

It is to diſcuſs this inference that I preſume to addreſs you at preſent; and I am not without hopes, that the frank avowal of the ſentiments of a moderate clergyman, expreſſed in a different tone from what can be expected in the temporary hoſtility of popular debate, will convince you, that the line of diſtinction between the two parties in the church is very narrow, though ſtrongly marked, and ſufficiently clear.

It muſt give great pleaſure to every good man, to reflect, that the church of Scotland has long enjoyed the moſt perfect harmony and unanimity reſpecting the great and important points in which the religious intereſts of her people are more immediately concerned. In declaring the truths of religion, and preſerving the purity of the faith, that ſacred truſt which we have received from our Maſter, and for which we ſtand reſponſible in the moſt awful ſenſe, the miniſters of this church are of one heart and of one mind. In doctrine, in diſcipline, and in worſhip, there are no diviſions amongſt us: we owe to our regulated education, to the laudable jealouſy of our eſtabliſhment, and to the good ſenſe of the clergy themſelves, that our people are in no

no danger of being diſtracted by jarring theories from the pulpit, in their moſt momentuous concerns; that the word *hereſy* is not once mentioned among us; and that we do not meet in our church-courts, to diſcuſs articles of faith, or to divide on the orthodoxy of opinions.

They are points of much lower concern, on which we argue, and on which we vote. The chief and almoſt the ſole difference between the two great parties of this church, relates to the mode, in which men, whom the church hath already found qualified to fill any charge within the kingdom, ſhall be nominated to particular pariſhes.

It is not conſiſtent with my purpoſe, in this addreſs, to trouble you with any hiſtorical deduction of this controverſy, or to reaſon from a ſingle fact prior to the act of Queen Anne in the year 1712, by which patronage was reſtored and confirmed by law. I know, Gentlemen, that, in your reſearches into the principles of the conſtitution, ye are accuſtomed to go much farther back; to examine the power of patrons prior to the 1690, in order to aſcertain thoſe rights in patrons which were reſtored by the act of the Queen; and that ye endeavour to eſtabliſh as law, the eſſential condition of a call from heritors, or ſeſſion, or ſome deſcrip-

ſcription of people, as forming a part of thoſe rules of the church, according to which it is declared that miniſters ſhall be ſettled.—I know likewiſe, that our friends of the moderate intereſt follow you in theſe reſearches into remote times; and argue from venerable ſtatutes, that the protection which the legiſlature tenders to the church, is ſuſpended upon the condition of its obedience to the law of patronage, to which it is bound and aſtricted; and prove to you from ancient records, that the election of the people is unknown to the conſtitution of this church.

Theſe topics of argument from both parties, are brought forward into regular review in every General Aſſembly, and repeated with as much ſameneſs as the ſtated forms of court; and, for all the purpoſes of utility, might as well be read over at once by the clerk in his place, were it not that they furniſh materials for the young orators, whom it would be hard thus to deprive of their right to ſpeeches authenticated by preſcription.

Men of ſenſe, on both ſides, are perfectly agreed, that the act of patronage is the law which binds this church; that it doth *de facto* convey to the preſentee the excluſive qualification of inveſtiture in the civil rights, which are connected with ordination

or

or admiſſion; and that, in the event of oppoſition from the pariſhioners to the perſon whom the patron ſhall preſent, no other alternative remains in the power of the eccleſiaſtical court, but either to grant collation in circumſtances ſo diſagreeable, or to leave the pariſh vacant.

The choice, in this unpleaſant alternative, is the preciſe point, Gentlemen, in which we differ from you. With a ſteady hand, but a reluctant heart, we fulfil the purpoſe of law; you, with the zeal of privilege, and with indignation at the dilemma to which you are reduced, beſtow a vacancy as your beſt gift to the people.

It is narrow ground on which we divide; and no man who conſiders the various views which unavoidably influence different men in the ſame ſituations, eſpecially in ſituations of real difficulty, will either wonder at our diviſion, or raſhly blame either party for the principles which they eſpouſe. A man muſt be under the influence of a very illiberal ſpirit, who could think leſs favourably either of the head, or of the heart of his brother, on account of differing from him in ſo nice and delicate a queſtion.

Allow me, Gentlemen, to explain to you, with all the frankneſs of honeſt intention, the principles upon which we act, and the ſituation

ſituation in which we ſtand; and ye ſhall receive in return, the real opinions of a moderate clergyman, concerning your ſituation and conduct.

Our ideas of the law of patronage are very different from yours; yet are not ſo diametrically oppoſite as you perhaps imagine. You conſider it as an infringement of the conſtitution, as an invaſion of the rights of the people, and as a grievance, in that high ſenſe, which juſtifies reſiſtance. We, on the contrary, conſider an act of the legiſlature, reſpecting the exterior arrangement of our eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, as a clauſe in the grand contract between church and ſtate; in which protection is pledged to obedience. As good ſubjects, therefore, and as grateful to a legiſlature, which hath inviolably preſerved to us its good faith, and fulfilled its ſtipulations, we think it is our duty to ſubmit. We act thus, under the influence of that ſpecies of moral obligation which binds a good citizen, in other caſes, to yield obedience to particular laws which his mind does not approve, and which he might wiſh to ſee repealed.

I need not tell you, Gentlemen, that civil laws are not indifferent to the conſcience; that they are guarded by more than civil penalties; that the duty of ſubjects is a matter of moral conſideration; and that religion hath

hath confirmed, by its ſanction, theſe general principles.

Our conduct is likewiſe influenced by an opinion, that, when a preſentation is granted, an individual hath thereby acquired a claim of juſtice at our hands, and which we, in our judicial capacity, are called to maintain: we conſider, that the preſentee, who by his licence hath received the ſeal of the church to authenticate his qualification for any charge within her bounds, hath, by his preſentation, obtained the legal claim to collation in a particular benefice. From the general rules of juſtice, and from the particular precept of the goſpel, in which we are directed to do to others as we would in reaſon and equity that they ſhould do to us, we think we cannot be juſtified to our own minds, in rejecting a claim ſo circumſtanced.

I know your anſwer to this argument, which we do not throw out as an oſtenſible plea, but as a real principle of conduct. You ſay, that the claims of the preſentee to the benefice do not commence till the church has granted collation; which ſhe may grant or with-hold according to her own rules; and that therefore no right whatever is infringed by her refuſal. I am almoſt unwilling to give this poſition its proper name:

It is a *ſophiſm*: for we do not allege, that the preſentation doth, in ſtrict language, convey the right to the benefice, but to a different thing, which your anſwer doth not affect; a right to collation, and a claim upon the church to proceed thereto according to her ſtated rules.

I beg I may not be miſunderſtood, Gentlemen. I do not mean to diſpute with you, which I am convinced would anſwer no good end; I only mean to explain our principles as they are fixed in our minds.

BESIDES theſe motives, by which we are influenced from views of ſtrict obligation, we are confirmed in the ſame ſyſtem of conduct, from regards to utility and the public peace. The illuſtration of this aſſertion may not be very obvious. Expediency, ye preſume, is entirely on your ſide: Where is the expediency, it will be ſaid, of forcing a miniſter upon a reluctant people; of creating diſaffection againſt the church itſelf, through the ſeverity of its decrees? Where is the utility, of ſettling in the face of a determined oppoſition, where there is no proſpect of a congregation at all; or at leaſt of that affection in the hearts of the people towards their inſtructor, without which his labours among them will be fruitleſs? How can the very meaſure which is the cauſe of palpable diviſion,

diviſion, be repreſented as the inſtrument of peace? Theſe are ſtriking objections; they are ſerious; the facts on which they are founded are alarming.—We deplore, from the bottom of our hearts, the foreſeen local effects of ſome of our own deciſions: we are grieved at the thought, of ſcattering any part of that flock, which it is our glory to tend and to feed; we will bleſs the friendly hand which will deliver us from the ſad neceſſity. But in this caſe, as in every ſyſtem of order, the partial evil muſt be endured for the general good. We muſt extend our views, from the conſideration of a particular pariſh, to the ſtate of the kingdom at large: we muſt call to mind the firſt maxims in every regulated ſociety, That uniformity in its meaſures is eſſential to proſperity, is the parent of confidence and of peace; and that wavering judgments are the certain ſources of litigation, oppoſition, and confuſion. Patronage is the law of this land; the church has not the power, either of evaſion or of repeal. Let us ſuppoſe, then, that under the influence of that regret which we do ſincerely feel for the condition of a reclaiming congregation, we ſhould concur with you in declining to proceed to the ſettlement: What would be the unavoidable conſequences?—That particular pariſh is left without any miniſter.—This is ſtill a partial

evil, and is balanced by the other confeſſed circumſtances of the caſe: and if this were the only effect of the ſentence, the caſe would be greatly altered; ye would be in the right, in as far as regards expediency. But the ultimate conſequence to the nation would unavoidably be, that the ſpirit of oppoſition, ſtrengthened by ſucceſs, would appear in every quarter; the ſlighteſt diſappointment of the people, in their views upon a favourite candidate, would riſe into violent oppoſition againſt the preſentee, however worthy, and however otherwiſe likely to gain their hearts, and to inſtruct their ſouls in the way of ſalvation.

The inſtances are numerous, and in the experience of you all, in which a miniſter, who had been received with ſome murmurings and diſpleaſure by many of his pariſhioners, hath in a very ſhort time, by his prudence among them, by his faithful diſcharge of his duty, and through their acquaintance with his value, become the darling of an united flock; and hath enjoyed that ſatisfaction in his labours, which flows from the conſciouſneſs of poſſeſſing the hearts of his people.

Would you wiſh the caſe otherwiſe, Gentlemen? Would you wiſh the turbulent in every pariſh to take the lead; to make every ſettlement violent, or at leaſt to bring forward

ward an embodied oppoſition againſt every preſentee? I know ye would not: I know that your wiſhes for the peace of our Zion are as ſincere as mine; though we differ in judging of the means by which it is to be ſecured.

It is here that our great obſtacle lies in what regards the utility of meaſures:—We feel the ſtrict chains of law; we know, that *the people of this kingdom cannot, as the caſe ſtands, have an eſtabliſhed miniſtry among them upon any other terms.* As the friends of the people, for ſuch, before God and men, we profeſs ourſelves to be, we think it is our duty to engage them to ſubmit, to what neither we nor they can reſcind.—We make it our care, to uſe our perſonal influence, in every caſe, to perſuade them to peace, in the proſpect of a ſettlement; and, when called upon in our judicial capacity to hear and to give judgment on their claims, we endeavour to promote the general peace by uniformity of deciſion. We do not then act as judges of the expediency of the law; but, conſidering the ſtubborn fact, that *the law exiſts*, we ſtudy to retain the country in a dutiful and peaceful ſubmiſſion. And this conduct of ours, we apprehend, is entitled, in the moſt enlarged ſenſe, to the characters of expediency and utility.

Do not be ſurpriſed, Gentlemen, that we ſtyle

ſtyle ourſelves the *friends of the people:* perhaps you do not think ſo; I am ſure the people themſelves do not regard us in that light. Yet, were it not that our cares for their real benefit are exerted in a wider circle than what their confined obſervations can embrace, they would perceive that our friendſhip is efficient; could they ſee our hearts, they would perceive that it is ardent and ſincere.—We do love the people; as clergymen, we have no importance but what is founded in our relation to them; we will do any thing but wrong to do them ſervice; we will do any thing to pleaſe them, but what we deem hurtful to them, or diſgraceful to ourſelves; we prefer their intereſt to their approbation; their peace and comfort in life is the wiſhed-for end of our public conduct; their eternal welfare is the object of our prayers, and of our labours among them. They may believe us, for we can have no motive to deceive: we take no pleaſure in hurting their feelings by a violent ſettlement; God knows how much our own are wounded, in thoſe votes which we are compelled to give, from a ſenſe of duty, and a love for thoſe whom we offend: the fear of this offence is no ſnare to us; for we are aware of all the conſequences of the part we act, and are invulnerable to every perſonal conſideration. But could thoſe who now wonder

wonder at our inflexible uniformity, and unmercifully reprobate what they deem a blind and reprehenſible obſtinacy; could our greateſt political opponents, witneſs the conflict in our breaſts, when about to give judgment in a ſtrong caſe; the ſtruggle between compaſſion and duty, which the loudeſt voice of conſcience only can appeaſe; they would admire, where they now blame; and thoſe very acts, which they aſcribe to contempt of the rights of men, they would conſider as the triumphs of public virtue.

I am confident, Gentlemen, that ye do not even ſuſpect the purity of the motives by which our conduct is ſwayed; our ſituation is the proof of our ſincerity in the face of the world. Excepting the teſtimony of a good conſcience, what is there on earth that we gain? Is it the good graces of the patrons, and the favour of the great, that we aim at obtaining? Verily, then, we are the bubbles of our own craft; we work for thankleſs maſters. The nobility and gentry of this kingdom, heedleſs of the civil advantages of eccleſiaſtical order, take no part nor concern in theſe matters. Even the courtier's ſmile, a ſlender reward, is no part of our portion; it was in the days of our fathers, that the roll of elders in the General Aſſembly was almoſt filled with the firſt names in the kingdom. They have now ungenerouſly left

us,

us, becauſe they have been convinced, that it is not their battle in which we engage; that our own principles are our guides; and that, in reſpect of conduct, we call no man maſter on earth. We now ſtand as a ſacred battalion immoveable in the cauſe of law, of juſtice, and of our country, though without an ally on the face of the globe.—Is it preferment that we ſeek? No, Gentlemen; we are not ſo blind to the ſtate of the country, as to take this road in queſt of preferment. The beſt ſettlements in the kingdom are under popular direction, and are inviolably preſerved for you: we do not envy you this decided advantage; we have food and raiment, and the conſciouſneſs of doing well. We appeal to reaſon, and to common ſenſe, if our ſituation does not unequivocally demonſtrate, that we act from principle, and from that alone: We ſacrifice our popularity, (not in our own pariſhes, for there we are as popular as you are); we are regarded as enemies to thoſe whom we love; we ſubmit to the keeneſt cenſure at the hands of our countrymen; and we renounce that chance of promotion, which our talents might have entitled us to expect jointly with you, had there been no diviſion of political intereſts in the church. It is no more than juſtice, to ſay, that there never was in any country, a more firm, a more diſintereſted, or a more heroic

heroic band of honeſt men, than the ſupporters of the moderate intereſt in the church of Scotland.

But we have been tried, and it is time that we ſhould be relieved.

Ye will not ſuppoſe, Gentlemen, that I have any intention to detract from your virtues, in thus ſtating the defence of moderation; we are not ſo ſeparated in affection, as that the vindication of one ſide ſhould be conſtrued into cenſure on the other. Your views are likewiſe pure, and your hearts are honeſt in acting upon them. You are of opinion, that certain members of the congregation have privileges, derived from the principles of general expediency, and acknowledged in the conſtitution of a Preſbyterian church, to claim a negative at leaſt in the ſettlement of a miniſter. You conſider the nomination of a miniſter to a benefice, not as a civil, but an eccleſiaſtical right; and you conclude of conſequence, that the plan of which the church was in poſſeſſion at the period of the Union, is conſtitutionally perpetual; being guaranteed by that ſolemn national tranſaction, which ſecures to the church of Scotland all her privileges for ever: That the act of Queen Anne, the project of a Tory miniſtry, whoſe intentions were hoſtile to the Preſbyterian intereſt, was an infringement of the articles of Union; an uncon-

ſtitutional invaſion of rights, over which the legiſlature itſelf has no power; and a grievance, in the legal acceptation of that term.

We are not lawyers, Gentlemen; but we differ from you here, becauſe we are of opinion, that, upon the principles of the Reformation, the right of nomination to a benefice is a civil right, of which this church was never in poſſeſſion, and which therefore was not guaranteed to her by the Union; and that the act of Queen Anne, only transferred this civil right, from one body of the Lay intereſt to another. Ye ſubjoin, that this transference of power in 1712 was wrong; that it was unfriendly in its intention, and hath been hurtful in its effects; and that the liberty of Britiſh ſubjects entitles you to ſay, that it is a grievance, in the ſimple and grammatical ſenſe of the word, and ought to be redreſſed.—What reply do we make to this?—None. We are ſilent here in our aſſemblies; we are afraid to fret the ſore, which, alas! we cannot heal; or to ſay to the people in a great court, your diſpleaſure is not groundleſs; becauſe we cannot add, that "our votes can remedy the evil." But we agree with you, Gentlemen, in your ſentiments of the law itſelf: we allow that it is a hardſhip; or, if you will contend for a word, we ſay with you it is a grievance; not ſuch, indeed, as to juſtify reſiſtance, but

ſuch

ſuch as will warrant application for redreſs. When I ſpeak thus, I am certain that I ſpeak the ſentiments of a great majority of the moderate intereſt. I know very well, that it is not unuſual to hear ſome of our light infantry in the Aſſembly, pronouncing high encomiums upon the law of patronage, as the wiſeſt and moſt ſalutary of all poſſible regulations; in the ſame manner as we hear, from ſome of your Weſtern ſquadron, the *jus divinum populi* reſounded through the court. Theſe ſkirmiſhing manœuvres are conſidered as matters of ſlight conſideration on both ſides; and have no connection with the views of either party, or with the thoughts of wiſe men.

I have thus endeavoured, Gentlemen, to call your attention to the points on which we are agreed, and to the preciſe line of ſeparation on which we differ; from which it is very clear, that our diviſions are not likely to ceaſe, and that there are inſuperable difficulties in the way of a coalition of the parties, whilſt unmodified patronage remains the law of the land. The moderate intereſt cannot act otherwiſe than they do, under the impreſſions which they feel, of thoſe obligations which ariſe from the duty of ſubjects, from reſpect to private rights, and from views of public utility: Nor will you, Gentlemen, ever coaleſce with us, under

the opinions which ye hold, of an infringed conſtitution, of invaded rights, and of local expediency.—The more I turn this ſubject in my mind, I feel increaſing regret, that there ſhould exiſt any marked public difference among an order of men, who, on both ſides, are ornaments to their country; and who, in private life, retain for each other thoſe ſentiments of friendſhip and eſteem, to which they are mutually entitled. Our people, to whom we wiſh to be in all things the miniſters of peace, are apt to conclude, from the unyielding oppoſition of two great parties, that we are divided in heart as well as in conduct; and that we poorly exemplify in ourſelves, thoſe mild virtues which the ſpirit of our religion breathes, and to which we call them on the high authority of our LORD.

The concluſion is founded in miſtake, but it is not the leſs pernicious.

THERE is one mean of coalition, and one only: Let the ſubject itſelf of contention be removed; let Parliament ſtretch forth a kind hand to heal the diviſions of the Church; let it repeal the act of Queen Anne, and eſtabliſh ſome mode in which both parties can agree, and by which the nation will be ſatisfied. We will moſt cheerfully co-operate with you, Gentlemen, to procure a reviſion

viſion of the law; it muſt come to this ſome time or other, and peace can never come too ſoon. When I ſay that we will co-operate with you in any wiſe meaſures which may be adopted for this end, and that we will rejoice in the event, with as much ſincerity as the moſt zealous man among you, I think I ſpeak the general ſentiments of the moderate party. I beg pardon of my political friends if I miſtake their wiſhes; I know the repeal would not pleaſe them all; and I know likewiſe, that no one poſſible plan, to be ſubſtituted in the place of patronage, would pleaſe every one of you. There will be diverſities in the views of particular men, reſpecting every regulation in human affairs; but I am convinced, that the great body of both parties concur in wiſhing an alteration, and that they would come very near one another in the particular clauſes of a new arrangement.

That a new arrangement muſt ſooner or later take place, I conclude from conſidering the ſtate of the country: The deſertion of great bodies of the people from the eſtabliſhment, is the melancholy evidence of the neceſſity. Whatever ſecondary cauſes may be brought to account for this, there is no manner of doubt that it is chiefly to be aſcribed to the law of patronage.

We differ in opinion from you, Gentlemen,

men, in judging of the medium, through which the act of patronage produces these lamentable effects; you throw the blame entirely upon us, because we uniformly give judgment according to the law, which neither we nor our fathers framed, and which neither we nor you can repeal. You say, it is to the rigorous exercise of patronage that the desertion of our people is to be ascribed. We hold, that it is your resistance which confirms the people in their opposition; and, by cherishing in their minds an imaginary claim of right, prevents them from submiting in peace to the law of the country. But, to what purpose do these recriminations tend? Whether it is we that drive, or you that flatter, the people out of the pale of the church; this much is certain, that they are lost to us both: and the inference which naturally follows from the confusion of these premises, supposing both parties in some degree right, is, that there is a radical evil, which ought to be removed; that the law itself is politically unfit; that it cannot be happily interwoven with presbytery; and that it is so dissonant to the temper and inclinations of the Scots, that either to enforce or to oppose it, prepares them alike for revolt from the establishment.

What the numbers are who have left the communion of the church, I cannot with any

any certainty affirm; I believe I ſhould be within the truth if I ſhould rate them at 100,000. This eſtimate is founded upon the preſumption, that there 200 congregations of ſectaries of all denominations within the kingdom, and that the average number of the whole people belonging to each may amount to 500 perſons. Methinks I hear ſome reckleſs youth, in delivering his maiden ſpeech, exclaim on this point, "So much the better, they are the factious, the turbulent, the enthuſiaſtic; the church is happily quit, it is only her ill humours that are purged off."—"Stay, my young friend; you are very honeſt, but you want experience; a few more years will convince you, that the church is not enriched by her loſſes, nor ſtrengthened by the deſertion of her ſons."

In every point of view, the increaſe of the ſectaries is a ſubject of deep regret. Theſe people themſelves, many of whom are the induſtrious and uſeful part of the community, are well meaning in the part they act; although it is confeſſed they are not generally the moſt enlightened, and we may ſay with ſufficient aſſurance, that they are loſers by the change into which they are ſeduced. They commit themſelves to the charge of leſs capable inſtructors; of men who, like themſelves, may be ſincere, but whoſe education and ſentiments are confined, and whoſe

whoſe intereſt it is, to confirm them in thoſe illiberal errors to which they are too naturally prone. From deſerters, they become the enemies of the church: they ſearch her records for fancied corruptions in former times; for errors which ſhe did not anathematiſe; for ſuppoſed heretics whom ſhe did not deliver over to Satan: they ſearch the annals of hiſtory, to recal from oblivion bonds of federal aſſociation, drawn up in times of tumult, for the extirpation of error. In fine, in the ſpirit of ſyſtematical hoſtility againſt the church, the tempers of the poor people are ſoured, and they are in danger of loſing that meekneſs and gentleneſs which become the diſciples of Chriſt.

There are entire ſects totally detached from the church, who pretend no cauſe whatever for their ſeparation, but what flows from the law of patronage alone.

It is to be obſerved, with reſpect to all the people whom we have loſt, that in their ſeparation they bear no analogy to diſſenters in other kingdoms. The diſſenters in England and Ireland are ſeparate claſſes of Proteſtants, who neither in worſhip, nor diſcipline, nor government, bear any conformity to the eſtabliſhed church. But the ſectaries in Scotland are not diſſentients from preſbytery; they are all ſtrict preſbyterians. Their forms of worſhip, of diſcipline, and

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of government, excepting in the article of ſettlements, are unchanged, and remain identically the ſame as ours in the eſtabliſhment: Their grand ſtumbling-block is patronage; every other objection to us is little more than pretence; till that ſtumbling-block is removed, they remain detached from us without hope of return.

When any regulation is enacted againſt the inclinations of the people, it is the hope of the legiſlature that the oppoſition will be tranſient, and that habit will reconcile all concerned to a peaceable acquieſcence. The experience of Scotland relative to the law of patronage, has ſhown that in the preſent caſe this hope is vain. Whether the prevention of this favourable change, is in part to be aſcribed to the continued reſiſtance of a great body of the clergy, I do not wiſh to inquire; I ſhould be loth to irritate, where, both by inclination and by duty, I am led to expreſs the ſentiments of benevolence. I only obſerve the fact, that for ſeventy years hath patronage been uniformly in force; and at this day, the minds of the great body of the people are almoſt as remote from mitigation on this point, as they were at its firſt enactment: there is little hope, therefore, that time will completely work the cure.

There is one great cauſe of the continuance of oppoſition, which both parties

muſt condemn, and at which they cry, "Shame!" and that is, the conduct of many of the patrons themſelves. Men poſſeſſed of ſuch powers from the legiſlature, are under a civil and a moral obligation to uſe them with moderation and tenderneſs. If patrons were at due pains to conſult with men of influence, of property, and of good ſenſe, in their reſpective pariſhes, concerning the perſons whom they ſhould chooſe, or even to take prudent ſteps to conciliate their affections to preſentees, the church-courts would rarely be called to the diſagreeable duty of enforcing a ſettlement againſt a reluctant people, and the peace of the country would be effectually preſerved. But when preſentations are iſſued, by men who neither know nor care upon what terms their preſentees are to be received; when the good of the pariſh ſeems not even to have been in the contemplation of the patron; it is not to be wondered at, if the minds of the people ſhall ſometimes revolt, under the reſentment of neglect; to the great affliction of the preſentee, who may be a worthy man, and in every other reſpect calculated to be acceptable; as well as to the hurt of the public peace, and the vexation of the church.

If patrons would act wiſely, it is perfectly clear, that the operation of the law would be

be innocent: but who can compel them to be wiſe? In queſtions concerning government, the analogy of Civil policy is nearly entire, in its application to Eccleſiaſtical affairs. A pure monarchy would be a form of government perfectly unexceptionable, if men were always certain to find conſummate wiſdom, and unerring public virtue, in the monarch. But the experience of the world, the knowledge of human nature, of the weakneſſes and vices to which men are liable, and which are eſpecially viſible in the exerciſe of power, have made it neceſſary for people, who would obtain ſome conſtitutional ſecurity for their civil liberty, to recal a part of thoſe natural rights which they had lent too liberally to the Sovereign, and to take effectual meaſures for their ſafety, not by partial reſiſtance, but by new-modelling the principles of the government itſelf.

The application is obvious, and I need not ſpecify the particulars. In the laſt clauſe only, there is a happy diſtinction between our ſituation and that of people who ſtrive to redreſs their civil wrongs. In this latter caſe, there is no power under heaven to whom the people can apply but to themſelves. This is the circumſtance which juſtifies general reſiſtance, and which palliates even the meaſures of violence. But the ſitua-

tion of the church of Scotland does not come under this deſcription. You are ſincerely of opinion, that it is ſuch as juſtifies reſiſtance; but we conclude, upon the trueſt maxims of policy and of public virtue, that ye judge wrong. We think, that the law of patronage is a part, a defective part if you will, of one great ſyſtem of government and legiſlation, under the moſt free and the moſt happy conſtitution which any nation ever poſſeſſed; that we are ſubjects of a powerful empire, which affords us the moſt liberal protection, but which will not be overawed by our impotent oppoſition; and that the moſt likely means of obtaining any new arrangement in our favour, is to ſhow that we deſerve it, by yielding ſubmiſſion even where we have reaſon to complain: it is neither neceſſary, nor right, nor prudent, that we ſhould aſſume the powers of negation and controul. The Britiſh legiſlature poſſeſſes the conſtitutional authority, and, we may truſt, has inclination as well as power, to redreſs every real grievance, when dutifully ſubmitted to its wiſdom. The church of Scotland, which by unſhaken loyalty, and effective attachment, hath deſerved every indulgence at the hands of the ſtate, hath reaſon to expect, that neither juſtice nor favour will be with-held from her petition. The moderate intereſt, who have

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ſtood for ſeventy years as guardians of order, and as martyrs to law, have the ſtrongeſt claims upon the humanity and equity of their civil ſuperiors, to be relieved from an embarraſſing and painful ſituation, in which they have uniformly done their duty, *and in which they are reſolved ſtill to acquit their conſciences, though at the expence of their intereſt and their fame, until they obtain conſtitutional relief.* The popular intereſt, have reaſon to expect, that the wiſdom of the legiſlature will deliver them from the unpleaſant neceſſity which their principles lay upon them, of oppoſing, in the execution, any one branch of that legal ſyſtem which, as a whole, they reverence and admire. The landed gentlemen, from whom government receives its moſt permanent revenue, and many of whom have the conſtitutional privilege of electing the members of the legiſlature, but have no voice in the choice of their pariſh-miniſters, may not only reaſonably expect a change in their favour, but have influence to make an application to this purpoſe ſucceſsful, if they are but as much in earneſt for the preſervation of the church, as they are for the preſervation of the *game*. It is to the Gentlemen of Scotland that the church would now turn with an anxious eye, for co-operation in her wiſhes for relief. They may give us credit

for

for a diſintereſted intention in theſe our wiſhes: it is in their own hands, in a conſiderable degree, that we are deſirous to ſee the power lodged. The clergy aim not at power in this matter; we do not wiſh to ſee any part of it conferred on the church-courts; with unanimous voice we would reject the propoſition. Happy under the many and precious privileges which we enjoy, and fenced as we are by the conſtitution againſt colliſion with civil juriſdiction, we are fully convinced, that we poſſeſs as much power as we ought; and that it would be equally prejudicial to ourſelves, and to the country, to inveſt us with more. Our office is ſpiritual, and our power is wiſely limited to ſpiritual things. The great uſe of our order, and I hope our moſt earneſt concern, is, that we may be inſtrumental in advancing the intereſts of true religion: in ſo doing, we have our aim; and in ſo doing, we ſhall not loſe our reward.

Now, Gentlemen, if I may fairly preſume that it is the general opinion of all parties, that it would be for the intereſt both of the church and the nation, that the act of patronage were repealed, or ſo modified in its operation, as to ſave us all from thoſe diſagreeable ſituations to which we are reſpectively reduced; and, taking for granted,

granted, that we of the moderate intereſt are willing, as we certainly have the ſtrongeſt reaſons of any ſet of men in the kingdom to be willing, to co-operate with you, and with all concerned, for obtaining ſuch modification or repeal; the field is open, to conſider, what arrangement do you approve, and what plan do you apprehend would be moſt likely to ſecure to the church in time coming, that peace in her courts, and that union among her people, which it is the wiſh of us all to ſee reſtored. The failure of every propoſal of this kind in time paſt, has been owing to the want of plan; or of plan properly digeſted and weighed in all its parts, with that deliberation, unanimity, and temper, which leads to wiſdom in meaſures. To what purpoſe are all your overtures about ſchiſms, and calls, and the definition of calls? Theſe are merely the ſquibs and rockets of a party, which may diſturb our peace, but can never advance your views.

Let us enter frankly upon unſuſpicious and cordial deliberation. In the diſcuſſion of the general queſtion, reſpecting the beſt mode of nomination to vacant pariſhes, our ſpeculations are unfettered by the weight of any law, and I hope our hearts are unfettered by any prejudice.

The nomination of a miniſter may be veſted in one, in the many, or in a few.

We have had ſufficient experience of the firſt of theſe modes, to convince us, that it is ſo diſcordant to the genius and temper of the Scottiſh nation, that the friends of peace earneſtly wiſh its repeal.

Election by the many, or by the whole body of the congregation, is a plan which no conſiderate man would ever wiſh to ſee adopted: You, Gentlemen, and your fathers before you, have given up the thought and the wiſh of any ſuch regulation. The notion of a divine right in every pariſhioner, to vote in the choice of a miniſter, is allowed on all hands to be an antiquated conceit, which never had any foundation in Scripture, in the tenets of any church, or in common ſenſe. We acknowledge no right to be divine, but what is expreſsly founded in the Word of God: and we conſider the total ſilence of Scripture relative to particular forms of government in the Chriſtian churches, as a proof of that inſpired wiſdom, under which the ſacred writers delivered the oracles of truth and of peace. In the infinite diverſity of habits, of manners, and of modes of thinking, which from phyſical, moral, and political cauſes, diſtinguiſh nation from nation, it is abſolutely impoſſible that any one form of exterior government in eccleſiaſtical affairs could accord with

with the ſituation of all mankind. The character of univerſality, belongs to no inſtitution which was ever given among men, but to the Chriſtian religion only; which glories in this ſingular pre-eminence, that it is alike ſuited to human nature in every age, and in every ſituation; to reſtore it from its ruins, and to carry it forward to perfection. Concerning the outward government of Chriſtian ſocieties, religion preſcribes nothing but what is included in the general precept, "that all things be done decently, and in order, unto edification."

That the right of election, as veſted in the whole body of the people, would tend neither to decency, nor to order, nor to edification, appears both from reaſon and experience. It cannot be ſuppoſed that the whole body of the people, eſpecially the lower ranks, where ignorance chiefly prevails, can judge, upon any ſound principles, of the qualifications of a miniſter. We ſee in experience, on what kind of men they do fix their choice, when left to themſelves, in their ſeparation from the church; what heats and indecent ſtruggles they are engaged in on this ſubject; and how often their meetings are left deſolate for years together, under the irreconcilable oppoſition of their tribunes and leaders ſupporting the pretenſions of different candidates. Popular elec-

tion, on this broad ſcale, does not deſerve the name of a plan; it is a ſhapeleſs bundle of confuſion.

But the moſt diſmal conſequences of popular election, within the church, would ariſe from the inevitable degeneracy of the clergy, as its certain effect. Candidates for the miniſtry, would be under ſuch temptations to aſſume a Phariſaical character, as no wiſe man would wiſh to ſee thrown in their way. There would remain no chance of ſucceſs, to genius, to ſound doctrine, to ſober religion, to modeſt and unaſſuming virtue; qualities like theſe, proſcribed from ſociety, and ſtamped with popular reprobation, would give place to vulgar cant, to dark Puritanical intolerance, and to the worſt debaſement of character to which the ſlaves of the people were ever reduced. Let the *blue laws* of Connecticut, let the religious hiſtory of New England, be ever a warning to the nations, againſt ſubjecting the church to the people.

I BELIEVE we are agreed, Gentlemen, that in ſtrict expediency, the power of nomination ought neither to be entirely truſted to one, nor committed to the many. There is a middle courſe, which, for any thing that yet appears, may neither ſubject us to the evils which we feel, nor expoſe us to thoſe which

which we fear. Let the power be veſted in a few; let them come under an accurate deſcription; let them be men, who, from their rank or office, are preſumed to have capacity to judge of characters, and an intereſt to promote the real good of the pariſh to which they belong.

You anticipate me in your thoughts, and reflect already, that by the act of the Scotch Parliament 1690, which continued in force till the year 1712, when the act of the Britiſh Parliament reſtoring patronage was paſſed, the power of chooſing a miniſter was veſted in the heritors and elders of each pariſh. Ye alſo reflect, that by act of aſſembly 1732, which preſcribed the rule in which preſbyteries were to proceed in caſes where the patron neglected to preſent within ſix months, and his rights of conſequence were transferred, in terms of law, to the preſbytery of the bounds, *tanquam jure devoluto*: In theſe caſes, the Aſſembly ordained, that a call be moderated, and a miniſter choſen, by the majority of votes of the conjunct body of heritors and elders of the pariſh; and with reſpect to royal boroughs, that the conjunct body of heritors, elders, and members of the town-council, ſhould be ſuſtained as the competent electors. This act of aſſembly, Gentlemen, was propoſed and carried through by *our* fathers of the mode-

rate intereſt: it was oppoſed by your predeceſſors; and within two years, when they obtained the aſcendant, it was repealed.

This act of aſſembly 1732 is memorable in the church of Scotland on many accounts. It furniſhed the immediate occaſion, though not the cauſe, of ſeceſſion. It was againſt this act that Ebenezer Erſkine inveighed, in the higheſt tone of fanatical fury, firſt in the pulpit of Perth, and afterwards on Pentland-hills. He told the people, that this act of aſſembly was wounding Chriſt under the fifth rib, and tearing the crown from his head. What the man could mean by theſe ſtrange phraſes, I have no intention to inquire: but it was upon the *jus divinum populi*, that he founded his ſect.

Let no man be ſurpriſed at the bizarre operation of cauſes in human affairs. What if, after the revolution of fifty years, the very ſame regulation which gave riſe to ſeceſſion, ſhould now be the inſtrument of its fall; and if the church ſhould recover her wandering ſons, by the ſame means which occaſioned their loſs? The revolution of half a century produces great alterations in human affairs. Within that period, the face of this country is totally changed. The tempers of men are ſoftened, their manners improved, their views enlarged; religion is underſtood,

derſtood, as diſtinguiſhed from enthuſiaſm; and liberty as conſiſtent with ſubmiſſion.

It was not long after the repeal of the act 1732, before your predeceſſors ſaw their error; and were convinced, when it was too late, that, by their inconſiderate oppoſition to that act, they had put far from them the ſeaſon of deliverance. Government had at that time ſerious intentions of repealing the act of Queen Anne, and of reſtoring the church to the ſame ſtate in which ſhe had been from the year 1690 to the year 1712. The act of aſſembly, reſpecting caſes where a *jus devolutum* took place, was procured with an intention of trying the temper of the church; that by experiment it might be known, if ſhe and the nation would be ſatisfied with being ſo reſtored. But when it was ſeen that the experiment had failed; that it was met by violent oppoſition from a great body of the clergy, and had occaſioned confuſion in the nation; and that the act itſelf was repealed and diſmiſſed by the very next Aſſembly but one; and all this, upon the ridiculous principle of the *jus divinum populi*, and election by the whole pariſhioners, the ſcheme was dropt; it then moſt clearly appearing, that it was vain to think of altering the law to any good purpoſe; for that no poſſible plan, which was at

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all conſiſtent with common ſenſe, would ſatisfy the church and people of Scotland.

The conſequence of the diſcovery of their fatal blunder was, to produce in the popular intereſt a zealous attachment to the memory of the act 1732. They had been ſolemnly warned, by moderate men in the aſſembly 1734, that if they were determined to bury that act, they ought to entomb it with decent reſpect; for, it was added, "Your chil-" dren will come to weep over its duſt."

For many years paſt, Gentlemen, that act hath been your theme: You annually plead with us, to make it the rule of our procedure in granting collation, at leaſt in its negative efficiency, even in the face of a preſentation. That we cannot do; we are under ſtronger ties than a reſcinded act of aſſembly can lay upon us; but we ſtill approve of the overture of our fathers. Bring us an act of legiſlature, framed on the ſame principles; and we will meet it with open arms, and welcome it to our hearts: We will do more, if no better plan can be deviſed, and approved by the church; we will unite with you, in every prudent and conſtitutional ſtep, to procure an act, which in all human probability may cement the church into one compact building, and bring back the wanderers to ſeek the ſhelter of its hoſpitable roof.

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The plan of the act 1732 has conſiderable advantages.

In the *firſt* place, it bears great ſimilarity to the political ſituation of the church under the act of the Scotch parliament 1690; and from that time to the 1712, the church was united and in peace. I have not looked into the ſtatute-book; but, if I am not miſtaken, that act of parliament made no peculiar proviſion for the royal boroughs: if ſo, the plan of the act 1732, is an improvement upon the ancient rule; for the royal boroughs, as eſtabliſhed in legal corporation, are entitled to marked attention in a new arrangement affecting the kingdom.

Secondly, Upon the principles of the act 1732, the power is lodged with men whoſe deſcription is accurately aſcertained; who have a name in law, and concerning whoſe particular claims there can ariſe no ambiguity. This is a vaſt advantage in any great ſcheme of policy; for one of the eſſential characteriſtics of a good law is *preciſion*. The definition of Heritors is plain; they are the men whoſe lands are rated in the valuation-books, and in the ceſs-rolls of the county in which they lie. The deſcription of Elders is no leſs plain, and perfectly known to every man in the kingdom. And with reſpect to Royal Boroughs, the members of the town-council, fixed by a legal ſett, and forming

forming a corporation, and returned in an authentic liſt by the town-clerk, can never occaſion errors in aſcertaining their claims.

In the *third* place, By this plan, the power is lodged with perſons who are moſt likely to uſe it with diſcretion, for the peace of the country. The heritors, gentlemen of landed property, who may generally be preſumed to have had the advantage of a tolerable education, and to poſſeſs ſome liberality of ſentiment, are at the ſame time men who have a real intereſt in the virtue and peace of the people. The elders, who are uſually ſelected from among the moſt intelligent of the pariſhioners, and are accuſtomed to conſider themſelves as the repreſentatives of the people in what relates to eccleſiaſtical order, will naturally pay great reſpect to the inclinations of the pariſhioners, (but againſt whom the heritors are the natural balance, if that reſpect ſhould be exceſſive), have likewiſe an intereſt in the choice of an agreeable miniſter, to whom they are to be united in peculiar relation, as members of the kirk-ſeſſion, for the exerciſe of diſcipline, and for the ſupport of the poor. And in royal boroughs, the magiſtrates and council are preſumed to be taken from the better ſort of inhabitants, and may be ſuppoſed, both to have ſome knowledge of characters, and to

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have the intereſt of the town ſincerely at heart.

And in the *laſt* place, Theſe are the men from whom the nation does in fact take its tone, both in the higher and lower ranks. The approbation of theſe bodies draws after it that of the whole in every caſe; and in their hands, the church will enjoy the ſecurity, that ſhe will keep pace with the times, and will not fall but through a complete and national degeneracy: and it is to be hoped, on the other hand, that her influence, and the labours of her miniſters, will be the means of oppoſing ſuch degeneracy, of counteracting the tendencies to corruption, and of guarding the virtues of her children.

Such are the advantages of a plan formed upon the principles of the act 1732. It is but fair, that I ſhould likewiſe lay before you, what has occurred to me, as diſadvantages in this plan; whether in the view of its wiſdom or of its practicability.

In mentioning the firſt diſadvantage with which this plan is clogged, I ſhall be ſupported by the acknowledgment of all the leading men among you, although I ſhall not meet the views of your younger brethren of the Weſt. It is, that this plan is too democratical, both in its principles

and in its form. " So much the better," will theſe gentlemen exclaim, (like our youth on another ſubject.) " My good young " friends, it may be ſo much the better for " your proſpects of promotion; but we at " preſent deliberate on a ſubject of greater " moment." I ſpeak the words of truth and of ſoberneſs, and the wiſe will weigh them with temper: The danger here, which is far from being ſlight, is, that the ariſtocratical intereſt, which is centered in the gentlemen of rank and of landed property, and to whom great weight ought in all ſound policy to be allowed, might be too frequently borne down by the popular powers in making the election. The ſituation of the kingdom confirms this ſuſpicion: there are in Scotland a great number of ſmall heritors and feuers, whoſe rank and whoſe minds are plebeian, and who, with the elders in a conjunct meeting, might outvote the men of conſequence in the country, more frequently than in equity they ought. A moment's conſideration will convince you, that this is a ſerious evil, which ought moſt carefully to be guarded againſt: For not to mention the bad effects upon the character of the clergy, which would reſult from the general aſcendant of popular influence; the indignation of the gentlemen themſelves, at finding that they had acquired no more weight, or even

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leſs, perhaps, under our new arrangement, than they had poſſeſſed under the law of patronage, would eventually bring real injury to the church. It is of great importance to us all, that the landed intereſt ſhould be attached to our eccleſiaſtical polity in all its parts; that they ſhould take a hearty concern in our labours for the public good; that they ſhould have every inducement which we can deviſe, to attend upon the ordinances of religion in their reſpective pariſhes; and that they ſhould be firmly united to the church, by all thoſe ties which the inveſtment of effective influence can lay upon them. It is one of our great motives, for wiſhing the repeal or modification of the law of patronage, that the landed gentlemen may all acquire a liberal ſhare of thoſe rights, in the exerciſe of power, which are now engroſſed by a few. We are convinced, that our intereſts cannot be lodged in ſafer or more honourable hands: we conſider their countenance as of great importance to the ſucceſs of our views; and we have no reaſon to expect that countenance, unleſs our plans are calculated for their real as well as apparent advantage.

There is ſomething, too, in the form and appearance of elections upon this plan, which is highly democratical. A ſound politician will never conſider appearances as trifling

matters, or below his attention; the minds of men are powerfully influenced by theſe things: the habits of the people, and their modes of thinking, are formed, not upon what we reaſon, but upon what they ſee; their judgments are not always accurate, nor their inferences logical from the objects before them. The number of electors will often be great; where there are many great and ſmall heritors, and a numerous ſeſſion, in a country pariſh, there may in the conjunct meeting be fifty perſons who have legal votes. In royal boroughs, where there is likewiſe a country pariſh, there may be that number, with the addition of twenty or twenty-five members of the town-council. A conjunct body ſo numerous, aſſembled with the congregation, bears the image of a popular election at large, too ſtrongly expreſſed, to be innocent in its effects on the minds of the ſurrounding people. They ſee their neighbours giving votes while they are excluded; the diſcrimination ſtrikes them as invidious; they forget the peculiar claims of office, and they feel the fermentation of the old leaven, the *jus divinum populi*. In theſe meetings, heats and diſſentions ariſe among the electors themſelves; indecent and uncharitable words are heard in the houſe of God; and the people ſeparate with ſullen murmurs and complaints. This picture is not

not drawn in caricatura; it is copied from actual events, in parishes, where settlements have been conducted upon the principles of public election by great conjunct bodies.—You agree with me, Gentlemen, that in every case men ought to guard with equal vigilance against both the extremes of tyranny and licentiousness; and even so to adjust appearances, as that the simple may not be misled.

There is an important circumstance for which the act of 1732 made no provision; but which by no means ought to be overlooked, were the principles of that act to be adopted as the ground of a new arrangement; I mean the proportion and balance between the elders and heritors. It is in the power of any kirk-session, by the creation of new elders, to increase its numbers without any limitation. If no restriction is provided in this article, it will be in the power of the eldership to set the heritors at defiance on every occasion, and in boroughs the town-council too; and to bear down all opposition to their inclinations, by the weight of their numbers. I really do not know what regulation you would approve in this case; but you must at once see that it is absolutely necessary to guard against the consequence. The landed interest ought in equity, and as having a permanent interest in the parish,

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for themſelves and for their poſterity, to have more weight than the elderſhip. They will not be pleaſed to ſee the elders authoriſed to acquire even the half of the right of nomination. Neither will the magiſtrates and council of boroughs be ſatisfied, if the elders, by increaſing their numbers, can acquire an equal ſway in the place with them. Theſe other parties concerned will ſay, that the church is greedy of power; that the elders being eccleſiaſtical office-bearers, and often under the influence of neighbouring clergy, are too much favoured in a plan of which the church is ſo fond. What ſhall be done, Gentlemen? We would do any thing to ſatisfy all parties, were that poſſible: ſince that is not to be hoped, we will approve of what ought to ſatisfy them, becauſe it is reaſonable and expedient. Let it be provided, that only ſo many of the ſenior elders ſhall have votes, as are equal to half the number of heritors in the pariſh: That in caſes of royal boroughs, where the number of heritors of the pariſh, upon the ceſs-roll of the county, exceeds the nunber of the members of the town-council, only ſo many of the ſenior elders ſhall be competent to vote, as may not exceed the half of the number of the town-council. There are many more caſes which would require particular proviſos reſpecting this point; and I conſider it as a diſadvantage to

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this ſcheme, that it would require a bill of too complex and warped conſtruction, to be offered to parliament, as the the laſt reſult of the wiſdom of the church. Nothing can be either pleaſant in theory, or advantageous in practice, but what poſſeſſes the character of ſimplicity.

ANOTHER point, Gentlemen, which we ought to conſider with great care, is the probability of ſucceſs. I ſhould be ſorry to ſee the church engage at all in a buſineſs of this magnitude, without a fair proſpect of attaining her wiſhes. We muſt not diſguiſe to our own minds, the evils which we would bring upon the country, if, after taking any ſtrong ſteps in a buſineſs of this kind, we ſhould fail. Our people will not be indifferent ſpectators of our operations; they have at leaſt as much zeal in this cauſe as we have, with leſs diſcernment of the true ſprings of political events. They will reſent their diſappointment, at the hands of us all; they will abandon the church in greater numbers than ever; and we may regret, when it will be too late, that we have ſtirred thoſe embers into a blaze, which all our ſkill cannot extinguiſh.

The ſimple and unconditional repeal of the law of patronage, if a preliminary article in our plan, would moſt certainly be oppoſed

ſed by the united weight of all the ſubject-patrons in the kingdom: An oppoſition, againſt which, we, perhaps but feebly ſupported by the body of the landed intereſt, are altogether unable to contend. From the ſervants of the Crown, it is not likely that we ſhould meet with oppoſition on the ſcore of royal preſentations; theſe things are not greatly valued by miniſters of ſtate: They are given to the members from the counties, or from the boroughs, as matters of courſe. It is not by favours of this kind, that an adminiſtration ſecures the ſupport of members of parliament; nor would the gentlemen themſelves think it any great misfortune to be relieved from the burden of applications from their conſtituents, concerning preſentations to miniſters. They have too much experience of the embarraſſments to which they are often reduced by oppoſite applications, by which they muſt diſoblige ſome, to pleaſe others among their voters. With reſpect to royal preſentations therefore, if there remained no other impediment, it is no unreaſonable preſumption to ſuppoſe, that the wiſhes of the church and nation might be gratified, by a preſent, which would be joyfully received, and ever thankfully remembered. But ſubject-patrons have no ſuch paternal relation to the people, as dwells with the Crown. You have no rea-

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ſon to expect that they will make ſuch gifts: On the contrary, you have reaſon to expect, that their voice will be heard in defence of their rights, which for 70 years they have held; and that the legiſlature will not take from them theſe rights without ſome compenſation. There is one meaſure, which may be ſucceſsful becauſe it is in precedent: At the enactment of the law of patronage in the 1712, there was a reſervation to pariſhes, of a right of redemption for a limited time at the ſpecified price of 500 merks Scots. It is very ſurpriſing, that not above three or four pariſhes then availed themſelves of the indulgence; the country has more experience now, and the purchaſe would be frequent. Aim at nothing more then, Gentlemen, in your ſcheme of repeal, but the reſtoration of this right of redemption: Let the right become perpetual, like the right of purchaſing tithes from the titular: Let the price be raiſed in conformity to the change which the value of money has undergone ſince the year 1712. Inſtead of 500, let 1000 merks be the price; which is, I believe, nearly the average rate of the miniſters ſtipends for a year throughout the kingdom. Go farther: Let a year's ſtipend exactly be the rate, by which different patrons will draw their compenſation proportioned to the value of the benefice which

they can beſtow; a year's ſtipend being the full rate at which a right of preſentation is ever valued in the ſale of an eſtate: and in the view of the pecuniary intereſt of the patron, this price is to be deemed ſo much pure gain; becauſe the law preſumes, that, in the due exerciſe of his right, he can never put a ſhilling in his pocket either by vacant ſtipend, or in any other way, through the poſſeſſion of his title. In this ſituation of things, it is conſiſtent with ſtrict juſtice, and a due regard to rights, in the legiſlature, to reſtore the privilege of redemption, on theſe terms; and perhaps a great majority of the ſubject-patrons in Scotland would make little oppoſition to ſuch a regulation. The making theſe purchaſes, would be the terms upon which particular pariſhes ſhould be received under the protection and operation of the other clauſes of your propoſed bill.

THUS, Gentlemen, I have given my ſentiments on a plan of policy, eſtabliſhed on the baſis of the act of Aſſembly 1732. The plan is in the main founded upon good principles, and much leſs exceptionable in many reſpects than the law of patronage: we would very gladly make the exchange; and have no doubts, that it would be beneficial to the country.

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At the ſame time, this plan is clogged, as we have ſeen, with ſeveral diſadvantages; and there are obſtacles in the way of ſucceſs, which it may not be eaſy to overcome.

GENTLEMEN, I believe you are not ſo prejudiced in favour of any preciſe mode, but that you can bear to deliberate at leaſt, out of the wonted track; we are under no ſort of obligation to follow the rule of the act 1732, any farther than our reaſon may approve the wiſe ideas on which it was framed.

Is it not poſſible to begin upon a new baſis; and, by a ſimple and natural plan, to retain every feature of utility which we admire in the act 1732; to avoid the diſadvantages with which the revival of that act might be followed; and to enſure its practicability, by conſtructing it on ſo liberal a ſcale, as to correſpond with the wiſhes of all parties? Certainly, Gentlemen, we are not ſo far divided aſunder, as to make this propoſition inconceivable.

A NEW law, to anſwer all the purpoſes at which we aim, ought to contain the principal excellencies which we contemplated in the act 1732. It ought to lodge the power with voters of accurate deſcription, that its operation may be unembarraſſed. They

ought to be ſuch men, as may be fairly preſumed to exerciſe it for the benefit of the church and the country; and ſuch men from whom the country receives its character. The plan ought to be ſimple; to be as little obnoxious as poſſible to patrons; to pay peculiar regard to the landed, and to give ſufficient weight to the popular, intereſt. It ought to be ſuch as will unite the clergy; ſuch as will ſatisfy the people, without tempting their ambition; ſuch as is equally remote from tyranny and from licentiouſneſs; ſuch, in its form and appearance, as will command reſpect, and that ſpecies of ſubmiſſion which is united to confidence; and finally, ſuch as is moſt likely to be laſting, and in which a due balance will prevent political corruption.

PLAN.

Let the act of Queen Anne be repealed: let a new law ſuſtain the right of patronage; but ſo modified, as to remove all the hardſhips with which it hath been attended.

Let the patron poſſeſs one entire vote, in the election of a miniſter; let the heritors likewiſe enjoy one vote, through the medium of delegation; let the elders of the pariſh likewiſe elect a delegate, and thus enjoy the third vote. Let the patron, either in perſon or by proxy, and the

the two delegates, elect the miniſter. Let the preſbytery ſuſtain the call to the candidate who has all, or the majority of theſe three votes. This is the propoſed regulation, in as far as relates to country pariſhes who are under ſubject-patrons.

In all pariſhes of which the Crown is patron, let the right remain entire; but by an act of the legiſlature, (in which the aſſent of the Crown is implied,) let the exerciſe of the right be committed to proper officers ſo long as the act ſhall continue in force, in manner following: That is to ſay, that, in every ſuch caſe, the ſame ſhall be intruſted with the heritor reſpectively, who poſſeſſes the greateſt actual property within the pariſh for the time being, according to the valued rent; and this right to paſs with, and accompany, the revolutions of property, in ſuch manner, as that the claims of vice patronage may at all times be aſcertained by the valuation-books of the county, joined to the production of charters if demanded; without requiring any particular commiſſion of vice patronage, or other document of tenure: It being underſtood, that in theſe pariſhes (not being royal boroughs,) the election of a miniſter ſhall be veſted, in the vice patron, by himſelf, or his proxy, the delegate of the heritors, and the delegate of the elders; and ſhall be decided by the majority of theſe three.

And if it ſhall ſo happen in any caſe, that no

two

two of these persons in whom the right is thus vested, shall agree upon the same person, let it be provided, that then, the nomination of the patron, or vice patron, shall be sustained.

Let it be further provided, that in the royal boroughs throughout the kingdom, the magistrates and town-council shall be empowered to choose two delegates from among their number, who shall have separate voices in the election of a minister; and that in these parishes, the right of election shall be vested in the five persons following, viz. the patron, or vice-patron, of the parish, or his proxy, respectively, one delegate from the heritors, one delegate from the elders, and the said two delegates from the town-council.

And in order to indemnify patrons for these new restrictions upon their powers, let it be provided, that all vacant stipends shall be declared to become their absolute property, instead of being conveyed in trust for any other purpose.

Such, Gentlemen, are the great lines of a plan, which with much deference is submitted to your review. I have thrown it together entire without interweaving any illustration. I have only to ask you, that you will not at the first glance condemn it, but give it that candid attention, to which every pro-

propoſition which is honeſtly aimed for the public good is entitled.

There are, no doubt, ſeveral articles of a ſecondary order, which would require a ſeparate deliberation, if the great principles of ſuch a plan ſhould be approved. For inſtance, the cities of Edinburgh and Glaſgow, and one or two boroughs which have no country pariſhes, would require a peculiar arrangement, ſuited to their ſituation. The power of the preſbytery too, would require to be aſcertained by a proviſionary clauſe, to convene the patron and delegates within a limited time, to make their election. I do not mean to enter upon ſuch points; nor would it be proper, in the opening of a ſcheme, to bring forward prematurely any particular ſubjects of diſcuſſion, which might divert the mind from the firſt and great queſtion, which regards the propriety or impropriety of the leading ideas on which the plan is conſtructed.

In judging of this ſyſtem, it will occur to you, that, without being chargeable with thoſe defects which attend the plan formed on the act 1732, it not only retains all the advantages of that plan, but poſſeſſes many which are peculiar.

1. The ſubject-patrons have no juſt ground to complain. Their right is not deſtroyed:

ſtroyed: it is only ſo modified in the exerciſe, as to put it out of their power to abuſe it; and a reſtriction which is only levelled againſt the abuſe of power, is marked with no feature of injuſtice; more eſpecially when they obtain ſuch ample pecuniary compenſation as the free grant of all vacant ſtipends. It is the declared principle of every friend of his country, that patrons are bound in duty, to exerciſe their right with the expreſſed concurrence of the landed and popular intereſts in their pariſhes, in ſo far as theſe intereſts can be reconciled. The propoſed regulation is merely intended to guard the obligations of duty by the proviſions of law. We have ſeen the unlimited power too frequently abuſed; we have ſeen the peace of the country ſacrificed, to the tie of connection, to unaccountable caprice, to the ſpirit of contradiction, to an election job. I am ſenſible, that theſe cenſures are very far from being univerſally applicable; there are many inſtances in which the right is exerciſed with diſcretion: but the inſtances of abuſe are ſufficiently numerous, to juſtify thoſe precautions which would prevent the evils in future. Patrons ſhall yet retain as much as is conſiſtent with the principles of freedom. They ſhall effectively nominate the miniſter, if they can procure the landed intereſt of the pariſh on the one hand, or the re-

repreſentatives of the people on the other, to approve their choice; but under the certification, that if they can gain neither of theſe intereſts, it ſhall not be in their power to throw contempt upon both: The union of theſe two intereſts then ſhall prevail, and the ſettlement ſhall be conducted in peace. I do not think it poſſible, that the ſubject patrons in Scotland can look their countrymen in the face, and ſay, We will oppoſe the enactment of ſuch reſtrictions. How! will they ſtand forth and ſay, We prefer the licence of abſolute power, to the generoſity of our own characters, to our perſonal intereſt, to the love of the people, to the union of the church, to the comfort of the nation for ages to come! No, Gentlemen, although there is a great vulgar as well as a ſmall; and although ſome few, who come under this deſcription, might graſp their iron maces with a Gothic fierceneſs; the great body of the ſubject-patrons of Scotland are men of character and worth, who are ornaments to their country, and the friends of its deareſt intereſts. Far from oppoſing any ſcheme of real national utility, the nobility and gentry who are patrons of pariſhes, would, if honourably uſed, as they ought in all things to be, co-operate with us, with heart and hand, to procure for the nation a perennial ſecurity, againſt any ſerious

evil, which it might dread, from themſelves, or from their children.

It is to be obſerved, that the concurrence of the ſubject-patrons with our views, is, on this ſcheme, much more probable than on that of the act 1732, even with all the pecuniary compenſation propoſed on that plan as above ſpecified. The total abolition of the right of patronage, to make way for the ſyſtem then explained, through the recovery of the right of redemption, is not ſo much either for the honour or intereſt of the patron, as the plan preſently under conſideration. A year's ſtipend, as the price of perpetual privation of all his rights, is not equal, in pecuniary value, to the poſſeſſion of the vacant ſtipends at all times; and it is to be feared, that it is this calculation which would occaſion the oppoſition of many patrons to the ſcheme of the act 1732. Neither will the blending of the two ſchemes, by engrafting the compenſation now propoſed, upon the firſt plan, and giving the vacant ſtipends as the price of redemption, be equally acceptable: for let it be conſidered, that, on this ſuppoſition, the ſituation of patrons would be extremely aukward, when, after the diſſolution of all their rights of nomination, they ſhould retain their title and name, accompanied with no other relation to their pariſhes, but that of uplifters

of

of vacant ſtipends. Beſides, the plan now propoſed, gives the vacant ſtipend as a compenſation for what is only a modification of right, and permits them to continue patrons of the pariſhes ſtill, with the full enjoyment of all the power which is compatible with the public intereſt. They are thus liberally indemnified, for being ſubjected to reſtrictions, of which they could not have reaſonably complained, although no ſuch compenſation had been given. It is therefore extremely probable, that we ſhould obtain the frank concurrence of all the patrons in the kingdom with this plan, although ſuch concurrence would be very doubtful upon the principles of the act 1732, as above explained.

Let it be obſerved, likewiſe, in favour of this plan, that it lays no burden upon the people, by making it neceſſary for them to purchaſe their privilege in order to obtain it; and that its operation will be univerſal: whereas, upon the former plan, the poorer pariſhes, or thoſe whoſe zeal was weaker, would have remained under the act of Queen Anne, while the reſt had acquired the privileges of the new law: A great political irregularity, which would be extremely detrimental to the kingdom, and the very proſpect of which might induce

the legiſlature, to reject a bill ſo partial in its operation.

It may be ſaid, that the compenſation to patrons, by the grant of vacant ſtipends, is eluſory, becauſe they poſſeſs them already. The patrons dare not ſay ſo; and no man who knows the law of the land will think ſo. The vacant ſtipends are appropriated in law to pious uſes within the pariſh, but indeed are very ſeldom ſo beſtowed; and pariſhes would in fact ſuffer nothing by their total alienation. They are ſometimes laid out in repairs of public edifices or highways; for which they are not deſtined in law, and for which there are other legal proviſions. The patrons are merely the factors of the public in this reſpect; if they are ſometimes bad factors, there is the leſs reaſon to regret that the funds in their hands ſhall undergo a new deſtination. It is always to be remembered, that, as the law ſtands, the patron cannot honeſtly retain a ſingle ſhilling of the vacant ſtipend, but that to do ſo would be direct iniquity in legal conſtruction. The propoſed grant, therefore, of the vacant ſtipends in real property to the patrons, in time coming, is the ſolid conveyance of new emolument to the full extent of the ſubject. And when it is conſidered, that the election of the miniſter may not take place till near the expiration

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of ſix months, according to the analogy of the former regulation, and that trials and forms are afterwards to be gone through, there will, in almoſt every caſe, be unavoidably one half-year's ſtipend vacant, and often the ſtipend of a whole year: but, taking it at the average of one half-year only, the patrons of the richer benefices will draw from L. 40 to L. 60, and of the poorer livings, from L. 20 to L. 40 real gain, for each time that their right could be exerciſed; beſides retaining the full exerciſe of the right of nominating the miniſters, in as far as the public intereſt can permit it to be by them exerciſed and enjoyed.

I am ſoberly of opinion, that the patrons would be fully and cordially ſatisfied with this plan in all its parts; or, if they were not, and could ſet their faces to oppoſe it, that their oppoſition would appear ſo plainly unreaſonable and perverſe, that, by an amendment of our bill, the clauſe of compenſation would be ſtruck out, by the ſons of liberty in the Houſe of Commons.

2. This plan is founded in ideas which are already familiar to the nation.

Delegation is a well-known ſyſtem, both within the church and in civil corporations; the nature of the commiſſion, and the extent of the power of delegates, are univerſally underſtood. The propoſed law, therefore, will

will be clear in its interpretation, and leave no room for litigation on the ſubject of ſettlements before the church-courts.

3. By this plan, power is equitably diſtributed.

It is no ſmall preſumption in its favour, that it bears a marked analogy to the firſt lines of our happy civil conſtitution. This is the circumſtance indeed, which naturally ſuggeſts a ſcheme thus modelled, to the mind of a Britiſh ſubject.

The radical power in the patron, the ariſtocratical intereſt, which is compoſed of the heritors, and the people repreſented in the elderſhip, correſpond ſo well with that mixed government, and great ſyſtem of policy, under which we all are happy ſubjects, that we may reaſonably expect a ſimilar felicity in our eccleſiaſtical concerns, when ſubjected to a ſimilar arrangement. We muſt not hunt down the analogy in every quarter; for there muſt be ſuch diverſity in particular circumſtances, as the nature of the ſubject requires: for inſtance, we muſt ſuſtain the plurality of voices, inſtead of unanimity, in giving effect to the operation of the different powers. But it is in the equitable diſtribution of authority, in the juſt balance of ſeparate intereſts, and in the due conſideration which is extended to each competent intereſt, that this ſyſtem is, at leaſt in its aſpect,

aſpect, beneficial. I have already conſidered the propriety, and even neceſſity, for inſuperable reaſons, of conveying power to the men of real and durable property, in a greater proportion than to elders, whoſe ſituation is different. Now, as this plan preſumes, that patrons generally, and vice patrons always, are men of real property, it is obvious, that, taking in the delegate from the heritors, there are in every caſe two votes held by the landed intereſt, and one of the popular or the ſeſſion. This plan, therefore, is ſo conſtructed, that the landed intereſt ſhall predominate when it is united; and that the popular intereſt ſhall prevail, and have deciſive ſway, when the landed, or the patron and heritors, are divided.

In ſhort, the patron ſhall have his wiſh, if either the heritors or the kirk-ſeſſion approve: or, the elders ſhall have their wiſh, if they can prevail either with the patron or with the heritors, who are preſumed from intereſt and inclination to have the good of the pariſh at heart, to ſecond their choice.

It is fairly preſumed, therefore, that ſettlements thus conducted would be moſt generally acceptable.

4. A due weight is given to the public intereſt in royal boroughs, ſo as to afford a moral

moral certainty of univerſal ſatisfaction, as the conſequence of this arrangement.

It is obvious, that, upon this ſyſtem, the power of patrons is proportionably leſs in boroughs than elſewhere. But gentlemen will recollect, that the country is already familiarized to this conſequence. The political importance of theſe legal corporations is felt to be ſuch, as generally to procure them their choice of a miniſter as the caſe ſtands. Beſides, the predominance of public influence in boroughs is juſtified by high expediency. The great majority of the inhabitants of a pariſh where there is a borough, are generally included within its royalty; the magiſtrates and council, beſides their official importance, have for the moſt part great perſonal influence in the place: they ought therefore to have marked conſideration in the choice of a miniſter; at the ſame time, as there are preſumed to be conſiderable intereſts in the pariſh unconnected with theirs, they ought not to be able to dictate authoratively to the reſt. Something leſs, therefore, than one half of the votes, ought to be under their direction; we give them two of five. If they have any credit with the patron, or with the heritors, or with the elders of the pariſh, they may eaſily obtain their choice: if they have no reſpect from

any

any of theſe three bodies, they do not deſerve to prevail.

5. The propoſed mode of nomination will totally break the ruinous ſyſtem, of making the ſettlement of miniſters ſubſervient to election-politics in the counties and boroughs of the kingdom.

Our regret is as ſincere as yours, for our love to the church is as ardent, when we contemplate her humiliation in this reſpect: if ſhe ſometimes gains in the event, and a worthy man is thus introduced, it is by chance; for no favour is meant, in the tranſaction, to her or to her ſons. The landed and corporation intereſts, deprived of the privilege of fair votes in united bodies, and in the face of day, where a mutual check would ſecure righteous dealing, too often play their parts ſeparately, and with oblique aim; uſing private perſonal influence, to anſwer private and perſonal ends. The only warrantable principles upon which men can act, in procuring the appointment of a miniſter of the goſpel, are honeſt regards to the glory of GOD, and the good of the church. But when, inſtead of owning theſe principles, even our eccleſiaſtical concerns are ſubjected to the follies, or to the vices of the times; when the church of Chriſt is made the footſtool of worldly politics, or the prop of ſecular ambition; it is time that its

friends ſhould ſtand forth, and at leaſt take the privilege of ſaying, "Theſe things ought not ſo to be." I do not wiſh farther to illuſtrate this diſagreeable topic. I feel ſore under the reflections which it awakens: I leave it with you, Gentlemen, to conſider, whether the plan I have taken the liberty to lay before you, can ever make room for corruptions of this ſpecies, or for any oblique or ſimoniacal motives in the nomination. If it can, or if it is likely that it will, you have reaſon ſufficient to reject it: if it cannot, or if it gives as much ſecurity againſt them as the condition of human affairs will permit, you have one argument in its favour which will deſerve to be pondered twice.

6. The form and appearance of the call or election of a miniſter on this plan, will be orderly, reſpectable, and calculated to ſecure the confidence of the people, without any hazard of awakening their ſecret ambition.

When, after the moderation ſermon, the preſbytery of the bounds is ſolemnly conſtituted in the midſt of the congregation; the patron of the pariſh, whoſe modified right the people are already ripened to acknowledge, riſes, and publicly names the candidate whom he approves: next, the delegate of the heritors, producing his commiſſion from a meeting of the landed intereſt previouſly

ouſly held for that purpoſe, gives his vote in the name and in the preſence of his conſtituents, in conformity with their wiſhes, either for the ſame candidate or ſome other. Then the delegate from the kirk-ſeſſion, producing his commiſſion, in the name and preſence of his brethren, gives his vote as the authentic declaration of their choice; and if it is a royal borough, the two delegates from the town-council, producing likewiſe their commiſſion, with ſeparate votes, declare the choice of their legal corporation. The operations of the parties are then cloſed; the preſbytery ſuſtains the call in favour of the candidate who is choſen by plurality of voices, and declares him duly elected. The call is then ſubſcribed by the voters in their public capacity; when the moderator, turning to the conſtituents of the delegates, and to the congregation at large, intimates the deciſion; and, exhorting the people to be grateful for their privileges, and to continue dutiful ſons of the church, diſmiſſes the congregation in peace. The peculiar advantage in the form of this regulation, in which no preſentation is neceſſary, is this, that the meetings of the conſtituents, heritors, elders, counſellors, are ſeparately held, without the view of the congregation; and that nothing appears on the day of moderation, which can exhibit the ſlighteſt image of a call on

the broad ſcale of the collected votes of the whole people; this laſt being an idea, which, for the ſake of peace, and order, and common ſenſe, ought never to meet the leaſt countenance, either in reality or in appearance.

7. The certain conſequence of a new arrangement on theſe principles, would be the entire union of the clergy. This effectual modification of the law of patronage, would remove the whole ground of diſpute between the two great parties in the church. Such union is deſirable in a ſupreme degree; not only for the ſake of our own feelings, but for a more important end, the ſucceſsful edification of our people. Our mutual private friendſhip in our preſent ſituation, tho' ſincere, is not obvious to the world; while our public diſſention is a palpable thing. As the miniſters of peace, we ought not only to be, but to appear, united in affection; in order that our people, reſpecting, without any undue diſcrimination, that character with which we are all inveſted, may be taught to turn their thoughts from unedifying ſpeculations on church-politics, to the pure doctrines of truth and of holineſs. But why ſhould I attempt to ſpecify the many ſolid advantages which would reſult from a general coalition of the clergy? You cannot but ſee them in a ſtronger light than can be deſcribed

ſcribed by words: our own hearts, the peculiar nature of our office, the ſtate of the country, the genius of our bleſſed religion, all concur to make us wiſh for total and indiſſoluble harmony. We have enemies enough in the empires of infidelity and of vice, to call forth all our exertions, and to employ our powers united. We have difficulties ſufficient in the diſcharge of our eſſential duty, to make us feel the value of mutual ſupport in public as well as in private life.

I hope the lay intereſt of Scotland have more enlightened underſtandings, than to be meanly jealous of union among the clergy. What can they fear from us though we ſhould become friends? We are poor, and therefore we cannot be formidable; we are reſtrained by law from inheriting any portion of civil authority; our influence is limited by the fences of the conſtitution, to things ſpiritual, and to them only: we are not lords over our people, but helpers of their joy: we know nothing, and we deſire to know nothing among them, but Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified. Our regulated eſtabliſhment, and our exterior dependence upon the civil power, are the pledges of our innocence to the ſociety at large: the alliance of the Church and State, under the mutual ſtipulations of protection and duty, muſt

muſt ever render the ſtronger power ſafe at the hands of the weaker. Do the gentlemen fear, that, by giving power to the people through the medium of the Elderſhip, we act from ſelfiſh ends, and mean indirectly to acquire it to ourſelves through our influence with theſe men; and that, through our union, ſuch power might be exerciſed with effect? The firſt lines of the propoſed plan contradict the ſuſpicion: for it is obviouſly our meaning, that, in adjuſting the balance of power, the landed intereſt ſhould always preponderate when united; and the popular, only when the other is ſplit. And the next conſequence which we diſcover in this ſcheme, ſupplants every doubt in the minds of the gentlemen; for it is our hope, and our well-founded expectation, that

8. This arrangement would cement the landed intereſt more cloſely with the church.

It is the ſincere wiſh of all parties, that the men of rank and property in the kingdom ſhould be impreſſed with a zealous attachment to our eſtabliſhment, and ſhould take an intereſt in the affairs of the church. We ſee with ſorrow, as one of the moſt awful ſigns of the times, a growing indifference in many to any thing connected with religion: but I will be ſilent on this point; it would be unwiſe to expreſs, in the language of cenſure, the motives of conciliation. When we

ſee

ſee particular families of rank, and many ſuch there are ſtill, regular in the obſervance of religious duties; we feel the warmeſt ſatisfaction, in contemplating the influence which ſuch examples muſt naturally have upon the inferior orders of men; we ſee our inſtructions ſeconded by a ſpecies of argument, which is level to every capacity, and which comes home to every heart. If any poſſible meaſure can be deviſed, which may confirm, and increaſe the number of ſuch examples, it is our duty to adopt it with ardour and unanimity. It does not occur to me, that there remain any human means which are likely to anſwer this end, except the conveyance of perſonal weight to the landed gentlemen in eccleſiaſtical appointments. They will then feel an intereſt in the church, which will imperceptibly lead them to regard her with complacency: they will even be more cloſely united with the people, with whoſe repreſentatives they exerciſe their power; and they will be pleaſed with a liberality, which has given them that marked preference, which their education and good ſenſe will enable them to uſe with diſcretion. The landed intereſt, thus, inſtead of incurring any danger from the union of the church, will themſelves acquire a weight in her counſels, and an influence

with

with her members, which will always be duly reſpected, and tend to the general good.

9. The propoſed mode of calling miniſters, would in all probability prevent further deſertion, and gradually reconcile the ſectaries to the communion of the church.

The great ground of the complaints of the people, is the unmodified power of patronage. They do not always diſtinguiſh wiſely; and therefore they throw the blame upon the church, as if it were her deed, and not an act of the legiſlature: while the more diſcerning among them, who know the ſtate of the fact, though they exculpate us, are tempted to revolt from an inſtitution which they conſider as founded in ſeverity. They are not now offended at the name of patron; but the whole body of the people, like the whole body of the clergy, wiſh to ſee conſtitutional reſtraints fixed upon the exerciſe of the power, to prevent it from being abuſed. This is truly the temper of the nation; and there is no neceſſity for the abſolute deſtruction of patronage, in order to meet the wiſhes of the people. Such eſſential modification as this plan ſuppoſes, would completely anſwer every purpoſe of public peace. When the people ſhould ſee the moſt reſpected names, whether from office or hereditary rank, exerciſing lawful power in every pariſh for their behoof, they would with full confidence acquieſce

quieſce in the united judgment of their civil and eccleſiaſtical ſuperiors; they would joyfully receive the miniſters ſo choſen, and be happy in all the privileges of the eſtabliſhment.

There is likewiſe great reaſon to believe, that a meaſure like this might in time bring back the ſectaries to our communion. There are at all times ſenſible advantages within the pale of an eſtabliſhment. That church which poſſeſſes the countenance and protection of law, will be always gaining upon its ſeparatiſts, unleſs it is ſtamped with ſome permanent feature of deformity, to which all their feelings are repugnant. When the grand cauſe, therefore, is removed, on which thoſe who have left us found their plea of diſaffection, their prejudice will ſubſide of itſelf; and when they witneſs the heart-felt complacency, with which the ſons of the Church felicitate their condition, they will return to the houſe of their mother, who will welcome them for ever to her bleſſings. The event is much to be wiſhed, for the ſound edification of theſe people themſelves, for the comfort of the clergy, for the honour of the church, which is inſeparable from its unity, and for the glory of the religion of peace.

10. This conſtitution will not readily be liable to abuſe, or to political corruption.

It is impoſſible to pronounce with abſolute aſſurance, upon any ſcheme in human affairs, that it can in no inſtance be perverted, or that it can never be ſubject to degeneracy. All that men can do, is ſo to order their deſigns, as may moſt completely remove the probability of theſe evils. The moſt approved maxim for this purpoſe, in the experience of the world, reſpecting the exerciſe of power, is to eſtabliſh a due balance of different intereſts; and to adjuſt the diviſions of power among the different parties, with ſuch regard to the qualifications and condition of each, as that the reſult of their combined operations may be ſalutary. The political defect of unmodified patronage, is, that the power is undivided, and therefore is liable to irremediable abuſe.—The political defect of popular election at large, is, that the power is entirely lodged in one intereſt, and in that intereſt in which the genius of legiſlation does not preſume that there is wiſdom.

I explain this laſt ſentence by the principles laid down by Sir William Blackſtone, in his Commentaries on the Laws of England.—The ſubſtance of the reaſoning of that great lawyer, and which he illuſtrates by a higher ſimilitude than I chooſe to employ, is this, That the three great principles of the beſt government are, power, wiſdom, and

and rectitude: That the two laſt, are the rules and reſtrictions which prevent the improper application of the firſt. That in Britain, an ample ſhare of power remains with the Sovereign: but, in matters of national concern, it is modified by that wiſdom which the conſtitution preſumes to dwell with the ariſtocracy, the adviſers of the Crown, in their auguſt aſſembly; and by that rectitude which is ſuppoſed to influence the reſolutions of the Commons, the repreſentatives of the people, for the benefit of their conſtituents: And that by this diviſion of power, and the due balance of ſeparate intereſts, the beſt poſſible proviſion is made againſt the effects of human imperfection.

We preſume, therefore, upon the analogy of ideas, that the people, in the eye of ſtrict policy, mean well; and that the elderſhip, under the impreſſion of being intruſted with their intereſts, will act with upright intention for their behoof: but we cannot preſume ſo far upon their wiſdom, as to truſt them with an uncontrouled exerciſe of power. In the ariſtocracy of the landed intereſt, we expect wiſdom both in the diſcernment of the characters of candidates, and in judging upon liberal views of what is for the real benefit of the community. In the patron, we leave the poſſeſſion of his ſeparate power, and the exerciſe of it, as amply as

the public welfare will admit, and as he in conſcience ought to deſire. It is laudable to wiſh for a power to do good, but no man ought to wiſh for the power of doing evil. On the contrary, the conſciouſneſs of the frailty of human nature, would lead a prudent man to rejoice, when the opportunities and the temptations to act wrong in any caſe are far removed from him and from his children.

If ye have had patience, Gentlemen, to follow me thus far, in conſidering a plan of general coalition; I ſhall crave your indulgence a little longer, to conſider, if there are any peculiar reaſons for a propoſition of this kind in the preſent juncture.

It occurs to me, that, at this period, there are reaſons of a very peculiar kind, which both evince the neceſſity of a new arrangement, and which juſtify the prudence of the attempt by the probability of ſucceſs. Will you allow me to explain myſelf with freedom, and do me the juſtice to believe, that I do not mean to diſpute as the partizan of any cauſe, but to reaſon with you as a brother upon honeſt and deliberate conviction? It is the general opinion of the friends with whom I am proud to act in public conduct, that the Aſſembly 1779 took the deciſive ſtep, which left to the church no other

other alternative, but either the ruin of the conſtitution, or a new arrangement in the mode of ſettlement. That Aſſembly eſtabliſhed the precedent of granting Chapels of Eaſe, in connection with the Church, upon the ſimple and unqualified plea of diſlike to the pariſh-miniſters. Don't be impatient, I beſeech you, Gentlemen. I know this is a tender point with you. I do believe, that your intentions were pure; and that your aim was, to eſtabliſh, in behalf of the people, a mode, by which the operation of patronage might be evaded, in caſes where they ſhould be able and willing to build a meeting-houſe, and to pay a miniſter for themſelves. You concluded that you acted a laudable part, and that you fulfilled the claim of equity and humanity, when you thus conceded the means of redreſs, againſt a grievance which ye had not power to remove. For five years we held our aſcendant, and reſiſted your attempts; not that we were leſs equitable or leſs humane than you, or leſs inclined to make the people happy. But we knew, that we were the members of a regular eſtabliſhment, whoſe proſperity is founded upon order; and that a legal evaſion of the operation of law is a contradiction in terms. We maintained, that it is contrary to the maxims of ſound policy, to convey the pri-

privileges of any ſociety, to thoſe who place themſelves beyond its controul, and from whom it cannot exact the returns of duty and ſubmiſſion; and that, through the precedent which you were ſo anxious to eſtabliſh, and the bait of popular election thereby thrown out to the nation, the regular miniſters of the church of Scotland, whom the State owns and protects, would incur the privation of all their eccleſiaſtical honours, and be left the deſpicable incumbents on ſecular benefices only. You were duly warned, that if the miniſters and elders of the church, the natural guardians of its ſafety, ſhould thus with their own hands diſmantle the bulwarks of its ſtrength, that ſtately fabric, which it was the pride of our fathers to rear and to defend, and which they made us in our youth ſwear at the altar that we would never betray, would be expoſed to enemies who would exult over its ruins.

I look back with aſtoniſhment to the event of that grand conſtitutional queſtion; I ſaw the faces of my friends, I marked the conſcious bluſh, when ye obtained an unbought triumph, and we, the confeſſed majority, were at once defeated and diſarmed: Yes, Gentlemen, you triumphed; and, had it been only over us, you ſhould not now have

heard

heard from me on this ſubject. But by the vows of your youth let me conjure you, to ſave the church from the effects of your precedent. It is ſhaken from its baſe; its compact unity is no more; and until its very foundations are repaired, it can never again be ſtrong.

I do not mean to throw blame upon any meaſure, or any man: I only conſider the neceſſity which a paſt event lays upon us, to adopt ſuch new meaſures as may avert our dangers.

To prevent the diſſolution of the Preſbyterian church, and the eſtabliſhment of a crowd of detached independent meeting-houſes in its ſtead, it is now neceſſary that the Preſbyterian body ſhould be ſtrengthened by union, and reſtored to univerſal peace by a new arrangement. I do not ſuppoſe, Gentlemen, that it was any part of your intention to create the dilemma to which the church is reduced; but the following propoſition is now true, in a higher ſenſe than otherwiſe it could ever have been, *That either the act of Queen Anne, or the church of Scotland, muſt go; they cannot now ſtand together.* You muſt not, however, claim any merit for having given riſe to this conſequence; for although you have created the neceſſity, you have not by that means facilitated the redreſs.

But,

But, paſſing from particular points to views more general, it may be obſerved in one ſentence, that increaſing diviſions, both within and without the pale of the church, are the circumſtances which muſt produce a fatal revolution, unleſs it is prevented by the powerful and ſalutary interpoſition of the legiſlature.

It appears likewiſe from the ſtate of the country, that the times are mature for ſuch moderate meaſures as are now under our contemplation. It is true, that it is but of late years that the people ſeem to have got the better of thoſe *jure divino* principles; which, while they ſubſiſted, muſt have proved an inſuperable bar to any reaſonable attempt to procure an alteration of the law: In that ſituation, to modify would have been only to irritate; and a partial conceſſion would have been ſpurned with indignation. You are well acquainted, Gentlemen, with the preſent temper and views of the people; and I appeal to yourſelves, if ſuch modification as is now propoſed would not give univerſal ſatisfaction. The Scots at preſent, though enemies to abſolute patronage, have no prejudices againſt the name of *patron*; and would have no objection to the exerciſe of the right in patrons, if under the legal controul of heritors and elders. This is therefore the nice period in the ſtate of the country,

country, of which the Church ought to avail herſelf for the good of all parties: and it is to be deemed a happy circumſtance in her favour, that her children are in a diſpoſition to liſten to reaſon, before ſhe herſelf is ſo weakened, as to have loſt their confidence and reſpect. There are cauſes in gradual, but powerful operation, which will effectually humble her, unleſs counteracted by ſome ſuch plan as the preſent: if ſhe neglects to ſeek her redreſs till theſe have done their worſt, ſhe will ſeek it then in vain; ſhe will fall unfriended, and will never again ariſe.

I SHOULD have been very ſorry to have publiſhed my ſentiments on a ſubject of ſuch importance, if I did not conſider our ſucceſs as ſo probable, as may vindicate the propoſal from imprudence. But wherever I turn my eyes, I can ſee no quarter from which we can dread any formidable oppoſition. I think I have ſhown, by as ſtrong arguments as any ſubject of policy will admit, that the ſubject-patrons in Scotland will not from intereſt and inclination, and cannot upon any reaſonable or tenible principles, oppoſe our intentions: on the contrary, we have every reaſon to expect their co-operation and ſupport. The powerful example of noble and liberal-minded

men, the friends of the church and of their country, and there are many ſuch amongſt that reſpectable body, would be readily followed by others, who would ſee their pecuniary advantage in the meaſures propoſed. The reſt of the landed intereſt will be convinced, that the church wiſhes to ſee them always treated, not only with reſpect, but with confidence, as the depoſitaries of power. Such of the principal landholders as would by this plan be inveſted with the privilege and honour of vice-patronage, may be preſumed to lend us their ſupport with a zeal which would be effective. The royal boroughs have every reaſon to be ſatisfied with the liberal conceſſion of two delegates in the call of their miniſters: And the people at large would be happy in the transference of power to elders, who always act according to their inclinations; and to heritors, whoſe intereſt it is to ſee them pleaſed and properly accommodated in all things, in conjunction with patrons, whoſe right they are willing to acknowledge under due limitations.

It may perhaps occur to ſome of you, Gentlemen, that we might meet with ſome obſtacles in reſpect of the royal rights. I cannot be of this opinion. Patronage, reſpecting

ſpecting Scotland, is not, in legal conſtruction, a part of prerogative; for here the eccleſiaſtical ſupremacy is excluded by the Union. Beſides, prerogative cannot be partial; whereas the Crown enjoys its rights over a part only of the pariſhes of this kingdom. Patronage in the Crown is held, not by prerogative, but by civil inheritance; by which the Sovereign, as univerſal heir to things forfeited, or to which no ſubject has legal claim, hath, through ſuch civil accidents, acquired his perſonal rights. From theſe conſiderations, I preſume, it would be found, that the rights of patronage in Scotland are no part of unalienable prerogative, but do admit of conveyance, and even total alienation from the Sovereign, by his own act and deed, or by act of parliament, in which his conſent is included.

But there is no need for diſputing points like theſe. For this plan goes upon the principle, that the right itſelf ſhall remain inherent in the Sovereign: only that the execution thereof in detail, ſhall be committed to proper officers, as above ſtated; in the ſame manner as lieutenancies of counties in England, ſheriffdoms in Scotland, and the appointment of the judges in both kingdoms, are offices in commiſſion, for execution of certain branches of prerogative under the King, who, in the eye of law, is ſtill

ſupreme lord, high ſheriff, and the fountain of juſtice; and all the rights and honours of prerogative are held ſtill to be entire, theſe reſpective appointments notwithſtanding.

All doubts, therefore, reſpecting law and form in this matter being removed, we certainly have nothing to fear from the royal inclination. That gracious Prince who now fills the throne, whoſe cares are ſteadily directed to the happineſs of his people, and whoſe liberal countenance and protection have been uniformly experienced by a church, which he is led by inclination, as well as by duty, to preſerve, and to cheriſh, will feel the moſt cordial ſatisfaction in an opportunity of beſtowing a freſh proof of his paternal favour. The members of adminiſtration, who with the zeal of patriotiſm, at the expence of their own official influence, are now employed in ſecuring the republican intereſt in the conſtitution, and to whom the nomination of a Preſbyterian miniſter can never be an object of ambition, muſt, in all conſiſtency of conduct, ſupport the reaſonable claims of the church, the landed intereſt, and the people of Scotland. They will not aſſume the face of rigour, to graſp that little corner of power, which the royal preſentations can give them over pariſhes beyond the Tweed.

In the two houſes of Parliament, it is not con-

conceivable that we can meet with any obſtacle, except what may ariſe from one prejudice, which can be very eaſily obviated. It will occur to ſome of the Engliſh members, who were never ſuſpected of the want either of generoſity, or of indulgence to freedom, that the church of England is under an exterior government, which is analogous to abſolute patronage; and that the propoſed modification in favour of Scotland, would bear the image of partiality. But the members from this kingdom, who on the one hand are nobles of the land, and on the other are gentlemen, the repreſentatives of the landed intereſt, and of civil corporations, are fully able to explain to the members of the ſiſter kingdom, the wide diſtinction between the two churches, in the firſt principles of their political fabric. The church of England, and the genius of Epiſcopacy, is eſſentially monarchical; its judicial benches are filled reſpectively by ſingle judges in their ſeparate dioceſes; and every act of power, and authoritative mandate, hath the character of individuality in its origin. The people are thus, by the very firſt principles of the eccleſiaſtical conſtitution, trained to the recognition of abſolute patronage, as an authentic and unavoidable part of their church-government. But the church of Scotland,

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as eſtabliſhed by law, is a diſciplined republic, in which no one branch of its interior government can be exerciſed by an individual, and in which the nation is accuſtomed to ſee every thing conducted by bodies of men in joint operation. The exterior arrangement, therefore, ought, in ſound policy, to correſpond with the eſſential nature of the eſtabliſhment; otherwiſe the church will never be in peace, and the experienced oppoſition of ſeventy years, joined to the revolt of 100,000 people, are the proofs, that abſolute patronage is irreconcilable with the genius of Preſbytery. Men of enlarged views, will ſee the irreſiſtible force of theſe arguments, drawn from the very principles of legiſlation; they will yield to the voice of reaſon, and give peace to the land.

The unqueſtioned expediency of ſome legal modification of patronage, joined to that active zeal for the good of the church, which ſhe has a right to expect from the Scottiſh members; all of whom are ſuppoſed to be her ſons, and many of whom are elders of her eſtabliſhment; ſeconded by the public ſpirit of the wiſe and generous Engliſh; will certainly produce that unanimity in all the branches of the legiſlature in favour of this nation, which will crown our views with ſucceſs.

There is one circumſtance, which will par-

particularly influence the conduct of Engliſhmen on this queſtion: The prevailing opinion beyond the Tweed, whether well-founded or not, is, that the minds of the Scots are not yet ſufficiently emancipated from thoſe high prerogative-principles, for which they were remarkable in former times; and that the power of their old habits renders them ſtill fit to become either the ſubjects or the inſtruments of political oppreſſion. This idea, however injurious to us in other reſpects, may have happy conſequences in the preſent inſtance: "Let us encourage (will "an Engliſhman ſay) the genius of liberty "in the mountains of the North; let us "break that deſpotic power which may fa-"miliarize the people to ſlavery; let us re-"dreſs their grievance, ſince they have now "the ſpirit to give it its name, and to lay "before us their complaints. The Britiſh "legiſlature will ever make this its glory, "that, while it reſtrains popular licentiouſ-"neſs, it gives the bleſſings of privilege to "the nation, and liberty founded upon "law."

In truth, Gentlemen, we ſhall find no enemies in the kingdom to a ſcheme like this, if we ourſelves are united. But if the ſpirit of party ſhall refuſe to liſten to reaſon, the ſchemes of moderate men will prove abortive. It is not unlikely, that ſome among

mong us may think that this plan concedes too much, and that ſome of you may complain that it grants too little.

But gentlemen on both ſides ought to conſider, that no ſcheme of coalition and peace can ever take place, unleſs ſomething is mutually yielded. They ought to conſider, not merely whether this is the beſt of all poſſible plans, but whether it is the beſt which is practicable; if it is greatly preferable to the preſent mode of ſettlement, and if it is likely to unite all men of ſenſe throughout the nation. If theſe queſtions appear to deſerve an anſwer in the affirmative, the duty of the friends of their country needs no illuſtration. Let not the caprice of a few individuals, the ſticklers either for ſeverity or licentiouſneſs, ſtand in the way of wholeſome regulations for the public good. What would I not give to witneſs the death and burial of diviſion; to ſee the church of Scotland rejoicing in the reconcilement of her ſons; to ſee the wandering flocks brought back to the fold; and peace and love, the ſound characteriſtics of the religion of JESUS, thoroughly eſtabliſhed in the land!

THERE is one thing, Gentlemen, to which I would in the moſt earneſt manner call your attention; which is the dear-bought expe-

experience of this church in the inſtance of the act 1732; when your predeceſſors, by imprudent oppoſition to a plan of reform, in which the moderate intereſt, the nation at large, and men of weight in the legiſlative body, were all diſpoſed to unite, did defeat the friendly purpoſes of ſober men, fix down the law of patronage for half a century longer upon this church, and excite miſchief in the kingdom under the lawleſs banners of popular domination. The great body of your party at preſent, Gentlemen, as well as the Scots in general, are well diſpoſed to moderate meaſures, and will freely acquieſce in a reaſonable modification of the law: but it cannot be expected, that to a man, you are of one mind. It is the duty of all the leading men among you, to diſcourage and reſtrain, with all your influence, the popular phrenzy of any individuals of your body: for if any quarter is given to the voice of diſorder; be warned now, for the ſecond time, your ſons will weep for the error of their fathers. And if particular men among you, ſhall through weakneſs, or the want of public virtue, reſiſt ſuch ſalutary regulations as may unite all parties, and ſhall directly or indirectly ſtir up the people to reclaim the democratical rod; we of the moderate intereſt, do waſh our hands before all men; and, in the preſence of heaven and earth, *we do* PROTEST, *that they ſhall bear the*

blame for ever, if abſolute patronage is unalterably entailed on this church and nation.

It is no part of my wiſh, that the church ſhould adopt with precipitation any one ſcheme, how good ſoever, on a ſubject of ſuch magnitude as the preſent. It ought to be duly pondered in all its parts, by wiſe and experienced men, before it is drawn up in form, and propoſed to the church at large, through the tranſmiſſion of an overture to preſbyteries. Many ſuch men there are in both the great parties of the church, whom good ſenſe would lead to agree in their views, and to prepare their meaſures with ſkill. They ought to correſpond with their reſpective friends, and have the great objects of peace and practicability always preſent to their minds. If an overture ſhall ever come to tranſmiſſion on this ſubject, it ought to be accompanied with inſtructions to preſbyteries to correſpond with patrons, and with the landed gentlemen, within their reſpective bounds. It ought to be offered to the Royal Boroughs in their convention, for their concurrence and ſupport. The Church ought to avail herſelf of all her ability and influence, both to procure the wholeſome counſel, and the countenance of all ſuch men, whether clergy or laity, as can ſerve her

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with effect. I could mention many great names, of men, whoſe affection to her is ardent, and who can evince their friendſhip with effect. But it might give offence, ſhould they be thus brought forward in the pamphlet of a day. Yet, even the fear of ſuch offence cannot reſtrain me from giving a hint, which may indeed be unneceſſary, becauſe it will occur to every reader: She ought to avail herſelf of the tried abilities, and well-earned fame, of one, of whom his country is proud, and who for many years ſtood foremoſt with honour in the cauſe of moderation. She ought to avail herſelf, too, of the acute underſtanding, and hereditary eloquence, of a right honourable Elder, whoſe great talents are now ſucceſsfully employed, to redreſs the wrongs of Aſia, and to retrieve the honour of the Britiſh name. But I beg pardon for the freedom which I uſe; my intention will be my apology with the candid. Yes, Gentlemen, if we are but willing to unite, our meaſures ſhall be wiſe and effectual: in the combined ability of both ſides of the houſe, and in the countenance and advice of all the friends of our eſtabliſhment, we ſhall find reſources, which, with the Divine bleſſing, may reſtore and confirm the church of Scotland. We deſire on every occaſion to remember, that, without the favour of Heaven, no

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ſcheme of man will ever be productive of good; but we have every reaſon to expect, that He, whoſe mercies have been manifold to this nation, will bleſs thoſe endeavours which are honeſtly meant for the peace and unity of the church, and the intereſts of the kingdom of Chriſt among us.

And now, Gentlemen, I take my leave. I have not knowingly miſrepreſented any fact; I have not argued with intention to deceive: I have the teſtimony of my own heart, that I bear honeſt love to you, and that the public benefit is my only aim. You may freely criticiſe my performance, but you cannot juſtly blame my will. If I have ſaid any thing which breathes a party-ſpirit, I am heartily ſorry for it: for I own no party any farther than my principles inſtruct me; and I meant to deal fairly with all men. If I have ſpoken the truth too plainly, you will conſider, that there are occaſions in which it is criminal to conceal. I have publiſhed my name, although that circumſtance is of no conſequence to the objects I have in view; but I am willing to be reſponſible for every thing which I offer to the world: A plan which has public utility for its aim, is to be judged by its own merits; the quarter from which it comes, can make it neither better nor worſe. It is the wiſh of my heart, that

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good men of all parties ſhould be completely reconciled on earth, as it is my hope, that we ſhall all meet in the manſions of peace. I have the honour to ſubſcribe myſelf, with the trueſt friendſhip,

GENTLEMEN,

Your affectionate brother,

and humble ſervant,

THOMAS HARDY.